

# **Virginia Council on Women**

## **Minutes**

**Tuesday, October 20, 2020**

### **Virtual Meeting**

(Meeting held virtually on the platform Cisco Webex Meetings due to COVID19.)

Members Present: Ashley Reynolds Marshall (Chair); Aisha Johnson (Secretary); Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth (Ex-Officio Council Member); Heather Caputo; Nicole Carry; LaShawn Farmer; Diana Gates; Courtney Hill; Da'Shaun Joseph; Ramunda Lark-Young; Karishma Merchant; Marisol Morales-Diaz; Aesha Mehta; Kara Moran; Tara Roundtree; Holly Seibold; Michelle Strucke; and Brigitta Toruno

Staff Present: Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth (Staff Liaison); Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer; Courtney Dozier, Policy Director, Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam; Elizabeth Peay, Senior Assistant Attorney General; Maribel Castaneda, Director of Appointments; Suzanne Holland, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration and Director of Women's Outreach; and Mikaela Swann, Executive Assistant to the Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

Welcome, Call to Order, and Meeting Overview: Chair Ashley Reynolds-Marshall called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and gave the welcome. Secretary Aisha Johnson called the roll.

Agenda and Minutes: The September 15, 2020 meeting minutes were unanimously approved with the following corrections: add the title of Mikaela Swann, update the highlighted portion regarding the answer to a question by Michelle Strucke, and correct a typo in the last section. The meeting minutes were approved with the previously listed changes on a motion by Da'Shaun Joseph, seconded by Michelle Strucke. The October 20, 2020 meeting agenda was unanimously approved on a motion by LaShawn Farmer, seconded by Da'Shaun Joseph.

Public Comment: No public comments were submitted prior to the meeting. No citizens were in attendance to give public comments.

Chair's Report: Ms. Reynolds-Marshall presented the Chair's Report. She acknowledged and thanked Ms. Strucke for her work creating the Executive Summary. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall also thanked Ms. Joseph for her work on

the STEM Committee. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated that she represents the Council in the Health Equity Meetings. These meetings have been postponed and there was no new information to report at the time of the meeting. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated that October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Governor Ralph S. Northam issued a proclamation. She also stated that the week of October 19, 2020 was Women in Technology Week, and October was also Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Board Elections: Suzanne Holland identified the open positions. The position of Vice Chair was vacant, and the positions of Chair and Secretary were scheduled for re-election. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall opened the floor for discussion on the position of Vice Chair. LaShawn Farmer inquired about the responsibilities of the position. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated as a Vice Chair she continued to serve on her assigned committee, presided in the Chair's absence, and attended all committee meetings. Ms. DeShazor stated that attending all committee meetings is a recommendation of the Vice Chair, and Ms. DeShazor asked Ms. Holland to share the position descriptions in the Standard Operating Procedures manual.

The Vice Chair is responsible for performing duties and exercising the powers of the Chair during his/her absence or when directed by the Board, coordinating the process for drafting the Governor's annual report and the Board's strategic plan, and assisting in general Board management, perform duties as needed, and have powers as designated by the Board.

The Chair is responsible for providing leadership and direction, managing the Board and preside at all Board meetings and committee meetings, performing duties involved with the office and having powers as designated by the Board, guiding the Board in preparing the annual report to the Governor and the strategic plan, and upon notification of new Board members, the Board Chair welcomes each new member and connecting them with their assigned Committee Chair.

The Secretary is responsible for taking, reviewing and distributing Board meeting minutes, working with the Chair, Vice Chair, Board Coordinator, and Outreach Director on drafting and publishing appropriate and relevant communications.

Heather Caputo inquired on the chat feature for the terms of each position. Ms. DeShazor stated that each office is scheduled for re-election after one year. Ms. DeShazor suggested Ms. Strucke and Diana Gates to hold the

position of Vice Chair. Ms. Gates and Ms. Strucke both nominated themselves. Elizabeth Peay stated that the Board could create a slate and vote during the meeting. Ms. Aisha Johnson requested that Ms. Reynolds-Marshall serve another term as Chair. Ms. Gates, Ms. Joseph, Ms. Strucke, Ms. Morales-Diaz, and Ms. Moran requested on the chat feature that Ms. Reynolds-Marshall serve another term as Chair. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated that she would agree to serve another term as Chair if elected and requested that Ms. Aisha Johnson consider serving another term as Secretary. Ms. Aisha Johnson stated that she would agree to serve another term as Secretary if elected. Ms. Morales-Diaz requested to hear from the candidates before voting. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated that she looks forward to Board Members creating more thought leadership and more events for women and girls in the Commonwealth, and setting the Council's pace for the future. Ms. Gates stated that her term as a Council Member has been dynamic and enriching and that she has enjoyed events, especially the state-wide maternal health events. She also stated her desire to elevate the voices of Indigenous Native American women in the Commonwealth. Ms. Strucke stated that she was humbled and honored to be nominated, and this is her fourth year on the Council. She also stated that she hopes to address serious concerns of women, and that she supports Governor Northam's work dedicated to women and families. Ms. Strucke also stated that she enjoyed drafting the Executive Summary and hopes to see it transition in the future into an annual report. Lastly, she stated that she seeks to expand the populations of women served to include transgender women, and she hopes to learn from other women's councils in other states. Ms. Aisha Johnson stated that she has a background in communications and enjoys communicating meeting minutes to members. Ms. Aisha Johnson then called the role on all votes for each position. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall was voted Chair by 16 yea votes, 0 nay votes, and one abstention. (Ashley Reynolds Marshall-abstain; Aisha Johnson-yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Heather Caputo- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Nicole Carry- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; LaShawn Farmer- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Diana Gates- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Courtney Hill- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Da'Shaun Joseph- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Ramunda Lark-Young- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Karishma Merchant- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Marisol Morales-Diaz- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Aesha Mehta- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Kara Moran- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Tara Roundtree- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Holly Seibold- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; Michelle Strucke- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall; and Brigitta Toruno- yea for Ms. Reynolds-Marshall.) Michelle Strucke was voted Vice Chair by 10 yea votes. Diana Gates

received two yea votes. Five members abstained. (Ashley Reynolds Marshall- abstain; Aisha Johnson- yea for Ms. Strucke; Heather Caputo- abstain; Nicole Carry- yea for Ms. Strucke; LaShawn Farmer- yea for Ms. Gates; Diana Gates- abstain; Courtney Hill- yea Ms. Strucke; Da'Shaun Joseph- yea for Ms. Gates; Ramunda Lark-Young- abstain; Karishma Merchant- yea for Ms. Strucke; Marisol Morales-Diaz- yea for Ms. Strucke; Aesha Mehta- yea for Ms. Strucke; Kara Moran- yea for Ms. Strucke; Tara Roundtree- yea for Ms. Strucke; Holly Seibold- yea for Ms. Strucke; Michelle Strucke- abstain; and Brigitta Toruno- yea for Ms. Strucke.) Aisha Johnson was voted Secretary by 15 yea votes and two abstentions. (Ashley Reynolds Marshall- abstain; Aisha Johnson- abstain; Heather Caputo- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Nicole Carry- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; LaShawn Farmer- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Diana Gates- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Courtney Hill- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Da'Shaun Joseph- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Ramunda Lark-Young- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Karishma Merchant- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Marisol Morales-Diaz- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Aesha Mehta- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Kara Moran- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Tara Roundtree- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Holly Seibold- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; Michelle Strucke- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson; and Brigitta Toruno- yea for Ms. Aisha Johnson.)

Board Administration Update and Women's/Womxn's Outreach Update: Ms. Holland gave the Board Administration Update and Women's/Womxn's Outreach Update. Ms. Holland announced that she is serving as the new Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration and Director of Women's Outreach. She reminded Board Members to e-mail her at [women@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:women@governor.virginia.gov). She also reminded Board Members to submit their headshots and biographies for the web site, and reminded new members to send their signed oaths of office. Ms. Holland stated that the next post on Facebook will focus on Women in Technology and posts regarding the Department of Election deadlines. She stated that the October 29, 2020 subcommittee meetings are the last opportunity for the committees to meet before the end of the year. Ms. Holland requested that all members verify their names and information in the Board Matrix. October 27, 2020, at 2 p.m. Board representatives will meet with Governor Northam. Board Members can attend, however only Ms. Reynolds-Marshall and Ms. Strucke will speak. Ms. Joseph inquired about where to present marketing ideas for the Council. Ms. Holland responded that marketing ideas are presented to the Chair.

Ms. Holland stated that women's outreach continues to engage virtually. The Domestic Violence Awareness Month Proclamation is listed on Governor

Northam's web site. A Breast Cancer Awareness Month Proclamation is under construction. Women in Technology Week highlights women in STEM. Ms. Holland reported that August was Women's Suffrage Month and the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. A virtual panel discussion was held featuring stakeholders who work to advance diversity, including Ms. DeShazor. Outreach to women's and family groups was conducted for the 2020 Census, which has wrapped up. Ms. Holland stated that she is looking forward to Women's History Month in March 2021. April 2021 is also Women and Girl's Wellness Month. Ms. Strucke inquired about whether events are being held for Domestic Violence and Breast Cancer Awareness. Ms. DeShazor stated that she would check the Governor's and First Lady's schedules and communicate back to the Council. Ms. Joseph inquired about a hard copy of Women's Suffrage Month documents. Documents were sent last month but Ms. Holland will ensure additional copies are sent if necessary.

Administration Update: Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth presented the Administration Update. The 2020 Census has wrapped up. Virginia had a positive response compared to past Census events. The final Census report is forthcoming in addition to a road map for the 2030 Census. Ms. Thomasson also stated that the Governor's Office makes 700-900 appointments each year to boards and commissions. She has requested that Women's Council Members spread the word about citizens' opportunities to serve on various boards. Ms. Thomasson also stated that board diversity for each board should reflect the diversity of Virginia's population.

Post Special Session De-Brief: Courtney Dozier, Policy Director, Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam presented the Post Special Session De-Brief. She stated that Governor Northam signed key pieces into law. Governor Northam called the General Assembly back into Special Session to discuss the budget during the impacts of COVID-19. The pause button was hit on some initiatives as the budget was re-evaluated. The General Assembly has been charged to look at criminal justice and policing reform. Funding has been allocated to provide postage for absentee ballots. Ms. Dozier encouraged all Council Members to make a voting plan and encourage friends and family to make a voting plan. Governor Northam signed into legislation access to voting drop boxes. The Governor's Office is still addressing eviction and utility moratoriums during the Pandemic. The federal moratorium on evictions ends this calendar year. The Governor's Administration is researching extending the moratorium and providing relief to landlords. Legislation on transparency during COVID-19 is being addressed. What do nursing homes and long-term care facilities have to

report and when? Criminal justice and police reform legislation with a focus on training are going to the Governor's desk. No knock warrants and a penalty on filing a false police report based on race are also the focus of legislation. Governor Northam will introduce the new budget in December. Ms. Morales-Diaz asked in the chat feature about whether there is a focus on mental health and domestic violence. Ms. Hill inquired about whether mental health and substance abuse are part of the criminal justice reform conversation. The Council has been charged to think about what women in the workforce need. Ms. Strucke inquired about the timeline on guidance regarding COVID-19 and women in the workforce. Ms. Hill inquired about the proper time to speak with representatives from the Governor's Office regarding priorities. Ms. Dozier suggested the sooner the better, with mid-November being the latest as preparations will begin in December for the next budget. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall inquired whether the student loan cliff, remote working, and women and childcare are being addressed. Ms. Hill inquired about addressing women as caregivers and teleworking. Ms. Gates expressed an interest in the chat feature in participating in COVID-19 discussions regarding women's issues. Ms. Strucke inquired about data regarding women in Virginia, their salary ranking and numbers of women as entrepreneurs. Ms. Deshazor responded that data is not currently being collected, however a survey can be conducted. The African American Advisory Board is conducting a survey, polling communities on what is important to African Americans during COVID-19. Ms. Hill inquired whether the Governor was focusing on paid sick days. That is expected to be a priority moving forward.

A ten minute break was taken and the meeting reconvened at 3 p.m.

Administration Update: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update: Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer presented an update on the activities of her office. Dr. Underwood expects to have a Chief Deputy Diversity Officer on staff soon, as well as a position in the Office of New Americans. Ms. Lark-Young inquired about the Equity Leadership Task Force initiatives. Dr. Underwood stated that equity is being threaded throughout the COVID-19 response. Equity is being considered in vaccination planning and education. The Health Equity Pilot will request that local governments look at health equity in recovery. All updates on the Equity Leadership Taskforce will be posted on the web site shared in the chat feature, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/equity-leadership-taskforce/>. Dr. Underwood stated that health equity is being presented in recommendations to the Governor. The Pandemic has unearthed other inequities. She stated that information is being made available to all

regardless citizens of language barriers. Ms. Hill inquired about the equity focus on vaccinations. Dr. Underwood stated that a vaccination work group can speak to the Council. Ms. Strucke inquired on whether President Trump's Executive Order on bias training will have an impact on state training. Dr. Underwood responded that her office is committed to working with state agencies throughout the Commonwealth. The web site containing the Executive Order was shared by Ms. Strucke in the chat feature, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-combating-race-sex-stereotyping/>.

Committee Reports: Aisha Johnson presented the update on the Community Engagement Committee Report. She stated that Virginia Tech has agreed to postpone a virtual summit until after the first of the year. Ms. Farmer inquired where the community engagement meetings are held. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall responded that meetings are currently virtual. Aisha Johnson inquired whether she could invite a Virginia Tech representative to the next Community Engagement Committee Meeting. Ms. Holland stated that requests should be communicated to the Chair. Ms. Holland sends invitations to members of the Executive Board of State Government. Council Members can invite individuals from outside agencies. Invitation e-mails should copy the Council e-mail. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall suggests that Aisha Johnson also invite the Virginia Tech diversity office. Aisha Johnson also stated that a virtual summit would be a one day event with the possibility of continuing conversations virtually for about two weeks after the event.

Ms. Joseph presented the update from the STEM Committee. She stated that the fiscal agent for the STEM contest is STEM for Her. In October 2020 STEM for Her received funding donated by Capital One for the STEM scholarships. Capital One gave \$10,000 following a request form the Committee, and Committee Members donated funding to pay for the fee charged by STEM for Her. Ten scholarship winners were selected and each will receive \$1,000. Ms. Holland stated that Ms. Joseph has a template Council Members can use when making an ask for scholarship donations.

Ms. Reynolds-Marshall and Ms. Strucke gave the Healthcare Committee report. Ms. Strucke stated that she and Ms. Reynolds-Marshall met recently with representatives from the Governor's Office, Rachel Becker, Policy Advisor to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and representatives from the Virginia Department of Health. Policy recommendations on women's health have been determined. This discussion transitioned into the discussion on the Executive Summary. The Summary includes a description of the Council. The bulk of the remainder of

the report focuses on maternal health disparities. The introduction focuses on the maternal mortality rate. Additional sections include Maternal Health and Black, Indigenous and Persons of Color, Proposed Federal Legislation, Commonwealth of Virginia Statistics and Efforts, and the Health Committee Maternal Health Summit. Council Members who shared their stories at the Roanoke Maternal Health Summit are asked to check the Summary and ensure their stories are accurate. Recommendations to the Governor's Office include Maternal Healthcare Equity; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Health; Coordination and Multi-sectoral Approaches; Childcare and Family Medical Needs; Reproductive Justice; and Gender Equity. Additional detailed recommendations include Medicaid benefits for home births and doula services, full restoration of funds for FAMIS MOMS Services, giving women with high blood pressure a home blood pressure monitor, creating a two year pilot program that provides cash supplemental benefits to low income moms, and creating a toolkit for emergencies during labor in the Commonwealth. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall stated that she consulted with the Virginia Rural Health Association when preparing the Executive Summary. Council Members gave feedback. Ms. Lark-Young appreciated the historical information on gynecological care. She inquired whether equity training can be mandatory. Ms. Lark-Young stated that she will contact Dr. Underwood with her question. Ms. DeShazor stated that recommendations can be forwarded to the appropriate people. She also stated that the Council should think of next steps if racism is declared a public health emergency. Petersburg declared racism a public health emergency. News coverage was shared by Ms. DeShazor in the chat feature, <https://www.wsls.com/news/local/2020/10/20/should-racism-be-declared-a-public-health-crisis-gov-northam-state-leaders-say-yes/>. Ms. Merchant inquired whether safe and healthy relationship behavior education is part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and year-round. Ms. DeShazor recommended looking at the actions of other advisory boards, and the annual reports and executive summaries of other boards. Ms. Farmer recommended mental, physical, and social issues be added to the reproductive justice portion. The recommendations from the Executive Summary can be shared with the Children's Cabinet. Ms. Holland shared the link to the Children's Cabinet in the chat feature, <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/childrens-cabinet/>.

Vote on Executive Summary: The motion to move the Executive Summary was unanimously approved on a motion made by Ms. Farmer and seconded by Ms. Gates.



Goals for the Year Ahead: Ms. DeShazor reminded the Council of its charge detailed in 2.2-2630 Code of Virginia. She recommended planning for recognition months such as Women and Girl's Wellness Month. She also recommended partnering with other boards and commissions on the status of women. Ms. DeShazor further suggested elevating the educational, professional, cultural, and governmental status of women. Ms. Reynolds-Marshall inquired whether the Governor's Office will recognize professional women. Ms. Strucke requested additional information on the meaning of elevating governmental status, which is encouraging women to engage more in government. The Asian American Advisory Board has a public relations campaign. Other ideas for future activities recommended by Council Members include the following:

Ms. Joseph - Write op-eds, create videos, partner with other boards. Ms. DeShazor recommended working on projects with Ms. Holland. Recognize Women Equal Pay Day.

Ms. Lark-Young - Honor small business owners.

Ms. Gates - Create an end of the year video.

Ms. Strucke - Recognize Food Allergy Awareness Month in May.

Additional ideas should be e-mailed to the Council e-mail.

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m. with unanimous approval on a motion made by Ms. Reynolds-Marshall and seconded by Ms. Strucke.